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HOOSIER IN MANHATTAN

# Unusual Store Mails Hard-To-Find Books

By JANE ALLISON

As previously promised, we went around to the Book-mailer, 209 East 34th Street, to learn what the effect had been up to now of its offer to give away a copy of Whitaker Chambers' "Witness" with every copy sold of Alger Hiss' new book, "In The Court Of Public Opinion."



Allison

Here is the story. And no matter which side of the inflammatory Hiss-Chambers affair you are on it's an interesting one.

To begin with, Lyle Munson, founder of the Book-mailer, was until 1952 in the government. He had served in the OSS during World War II, was in the Berlin airlift, and at the time of the John Payton Davies affair was plans officer for psychological warfare, covert activity, for the CIA in the Far East.

**HIS DIFFERENCES** with Mr. Davies and George Kennan began in 1949, when Mr. Munson felt our whole Far East policy was being disastrously handled. By 1952 these differences blew open on the front page, with Mr. Munson still convinced the Left Hand of Communism was more than a little on the tiller of the Ship of State. He resigned in protest, along with five other CIA officials.

commentator has mentioned this offer, though it's obvious the Bookmailer is losing money on the deal, since each volume retails at \$5, and to do so would also be to give each side of the matter.

**HOWEVER**, THE reading public has been heard from. In addition to the violent letters both pro and con received at the Bookmailer there have been numerous others of interest. One word from a member of the first jury which tried Alger Hiss, who admitted to a great feeling of outrage that Mr. Hiss should write a book in an attempt to exonerate himself. Mr. Munson has also heard from Mr. and Mrs. Whitaker Chambers. Far from being offended that the so-called leftist or liberal press had ignored the Book-mailer's offer of a free "Witness" to every Hiss book purchase, Mr. Chambers feels that this is the best proof he has had so far of the effectiveness of his book. Clearly, he has said, Communist apologizers do not want his book to fall into the hands of people who might be otherwise completely convinced after reading the Hiss account.

**WHAT BOTHERS** Mr. Munson more than any other one thing is the review given "In The Court Of Public Opinion" by the New York Times, the Herald Tribune and the Saturday Review. Most especially the latter, which was so favorable. A book, he said, to be accepted

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by the majority of librarians across the country, must be reviewed in these publications. At this moment all New York City branch libraries (according to Mr. Munson, who has done a check) have at least one copy of the Hiss book on its shelves, and most of them have from four to seven. But more are arriving as time goes by. They are, said the N.Y. City librarians, "the gifts of anonymous donors."

Searching around in his mind about what to do next, Mr. Munson remembered once when he was stationed at Formosa and badly needed some technical books. He found a Hong Kong bookstore which agreed to get them for him, but it took five months for them to arrive and cost more than twice their original price.

He recalled this instance especially because the day he came back to New York, after resigning from the government, he tried seven bookstores before he was able to locate two definitely anti-Communist books.

**PUTTING THE TWO** instances together, "I decided there should be some free enterprise thing to supply books fast and reasonably, and also carry a full supply of the books that serve the cause of America." The Bookmailer therefore is the result. It's a complete bookstore, serving regular customers in 109 foreign countries as well as all 48 states, supply any U. S.-published book at the retail price, with no charge for postage no matter where it's sent.

With this as his background then, Mr. Munson noted that Knopf was bringing out the new Hiss book and, since the Bookmailer receives review copies from all publishers, they waited to get theirs from Knopf. But it didn't come. Then they called Knopf and asked for a pre-publication copy, but were turned down.

**BUT FROM** the salesman who handled their account they learned that the Hiss book was to get lead reviews in the New York Times and Herald Tribune book sections, as well as Saturday Review. Feeling sure he knew what Mr. Hiss was going to say, Mr. Munson felt equally sure that the careful student should read his argument with the Chambers book by way of counter check. Therefore, 10 days before publication of "In The Court of Public Opinion," the Bookmailer mailed out 150 certified letters (stating its Hiss purchase, Chambers gift offer) to columnists and radio and newspaper editors. Interestingly enough, not a single so-called "liberal"